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Raising achievement of English as additional language pupils in schools: implications for policy and practice

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at schools that serve English as an additional language (EAL) pupils and examines the factors behind their successful achievement. A complementary methodological approach of case studies and focus groups was used to explore performance and the views of teachers, governors, parents and pupils, and to evaluate and gather evidence on how well all pupils are achieving and the factors contributing to this. The main findings of the research identified strategies where schools were successful in raising achievement of pupils with EAL. Each case study school has its own character and emphasis but it is clear, from the evidence of the study, that they have common characteristics which underpin their success. These include providing strong leadership on equality and diversity, an understanding of pedagogy that best supported pupils with EAL, targeted support towards their progress, an inclusive curriculum which recognised and celebrated pupils' cultural heritage and the use of performance data for school improvement which included the tracking of individual pupils' progress and achievement. There are, however, some limitations to this study. While we do not aim to make generalisations from these case studies, we would argue that learning from the good practice in the case studies can make a difference to schools. The recommendation from this study is that there is a need for further research in different schools, Local Authorities (LAs) and regions in England to explore in detail what schools do differently, or more intensively, to support pupils with EAL.

KEYWORDS: English as an additional language; language diversity; bilingualism; attainment; ethnicity

1. Introduction

Whilst the subject of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) attracts much interest among educationists and policy makers, little is known about what works in raising their achievement in schools. This research aims to investigate how schools have helped pupils with EAL to achieve high standards and to identify significant common themes for success in narrowing the achievement gap.

A review of the literature suggests that most of the previous studies have focused on EAL assessment and stages of English proficiency (Demie 2017, 2016, 2013; Strand and Demie

2005; Cummins 1992, 2000; Collier 1987, 1992), bilingualism (Murphy 2015; Conteh and Meier 2014; NALDIC 2014; Cummins 1992), first language use when supporting early EAL children (Michael et al. 2016; Arnot et al. 2014; Krashen 1999), EAL achievement and language diversity (Demie and Hau 2017; Demie 2015; Murphy 2015; NALDIC 2014; Tereshchenko and Archer 2014) and government EAL policy (DfE 2012, 2006; Sutton 2017).

A number of other studies into the factors that are affecting EAL pupils' achievement attributed the root of EAL pupils' underachievement to various factors including difficulties in speaking English, ethnic background and other factors such as recent entry to the country and poverty. However, an important factor affecting EAL pupils' achievement is the language barrier. For EAL pupils to have full access to the curriculum, they need to be fluent in English. There are now considerable studies that have examined the way EAL pupils are assessed, their English proficiency and the relationship between stages of English fluency and attainment. In particular, there is research evidence from England showing that a pupil's fluency in English is a key predictor of their achievement in national tests at age 11 (e.g. Strand and Demie 2005) and in public examinations at age 16 (e.g. Demie and Strand 2006). These studies have examined the effect of stages of English fluency on attainment at Key Stage 2 tests (KS2) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). For example, the analyses of the national KS2 test results and GCSE examination results for pupils in an inner London local authority (LA) by levels of English language acquisition show that pupils with EAL at the early stages of developing fluency had significantly lower KS2 test scores in all subjects than their monolingual peers (see Demie and Strand 2006; Strand and Demie 2005). However, pupils with EAL who were fully fluent in English achieved significantly higher scores in all KS2 tests and GCSE than their monolingual peers. The negative association with attainment for the early stages of fluency remained significant after controls for a range of other pupil characteristics, including age, gender, free school meal entitlement, stage of special educational need and ethnic group, although these factors effectively explained the higher attainment of the "fully fluent" group.

Recent GCSE data from inner London LA also confirm similar evidence and show that fluency in English continues to have a strong influence on the performance of pupils with EAL at the end of secondary education. Demie (2017) collected and analysed data by stage of fluency in English, where Stage 1 were classified as beginner, Stage 2 as becoming familiar with English, Stage 3 becoming confident as users of English and Stage 4 as fully fluent in English. The results of the GCSE analysis show that the percentage of pupils attaining 5+ A*-C at the end of secondary education increased as the stage of proficiency in English increased.

In general the data show that there is a strong relationship between the stages of fluency in English and educational attainment. In general, empirical evidence shows that the performance level of EAL pupils increases as fluency in English increases. Pupils in the early stages of fluency perform at low levels and EAL pupils not fluent in English achieve significantly below White British pupils who speak English only. The findings also confirm that the achievement of EAL pupils who were fully fluent in English far outstripped those of pupils for whom English was their only language.

One common question which is raised by policy makers and classroom teachers in relation to the speed of English language acquisition is "how long does it take to acquire academic English fluency for EAL pupils?" Research in the case study LA suggests that:

It takes about 5–7 years, on average, for EAL pupils to acquire academic English fluency. However, the speed of English language acquisition varies between stages of levels of English. On average, pupils are classified at Stage 1 (beginner) for about a year and a half, before moving to becoming familiar with English (Stage 2), where they typically remain for about two years. It takes about another two-and-a-half years at Stage 3 (becoming confident in English) before they can then be classified as fully fluent. (Demie 2013, 8)

This finding is also supported by previous international research into how long it takes to acquire English fluency for pupils with English as an additional language, particularly in North America (Collier 1987, 1992; Cummins 1992, 2000). Both Cummins' and Collier's research findings suggest that it takes five to seven years in education for bilingual pupils to become fully competent in a second language and to catch up with their native peers.

However, a review of the literature suggests that there are relatively few studies that have examined the way we assess the English proficiency of EAL pupils and how long it takes to acquire English proficiency in a UK context (see Strand and Demie 2005; Demie and Strand 2006). There has not been much UK based research into stages of English language acquisition because of lack of national EAL assessment scales (Demie 2013).

Recent research also delves further into languages spoken by EAL pupils and shows that there is a complex relationship between educational attainment, ethnicity, EAL and language background (Demie 2015). This important new research approach into EAL attainment improves our knowledge and understanding of educational outcomes of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and EAL pupils in England and moves away from Department for Education (DfE) binary analyses, EAL and non-EAL, taking into account other factors that influence attainment of EAL pupils in school (Demie and Hau 2017; Demie 2015). Several other research reports published have also highlighted the need for a greater understanding of the implications of the increasing language diversity of the school population in the UK (Murphy 2015; NALDIC 2014; Tereshchenko and Archer 2014). Despite such research government policies on EAL failed to recognise the positive effect of language diversity in UK schools. There is still a challenge for researchers and EAL professionals to shape government policy to improve policy and practice in the classroom through effective use of research findings.

Other research has also been carried out into the way EAL pupils are supported in classrooms. The government recognises that there is a huge group of children within the English education system including pupils who are beginners in English and pupils who have learnt English to a certain level but have not yet reached academic English stage. To support teaching and learning of EAL pupils in classrooms it has carried out research into raising achievement of bilingual learners (DfE 2006). The recommendations from the study suggest that teachers need to use strategies such as opportunities for speaking and listening, use of talk partners, use of first language to support the child's learning, finding means to monitor the progress of advanced bilingual students and strategies to be applied across the whole curriculum. What is interesting from looking at this document is that the strategies suggested for the advanced EAL learners are similar to the strategies suggested for children who are early EAL. It particularly argues that initial assessments, use of buddy systems for new arrivals, personalised learning, individual targets, an interactive learning environment, opportunity for talk (role play, talk partners, etc.) and opportunities for silence appear essential for EAL learners. What is also clear from the literature review is the DfE wants us to focus on teaching English and not on the child's first language, but research has supported the use of the child's

first language on the whole (DfE 2012). The DfE states that first languages should not really be a consideration in teaching EAL children and an English only approach should be used (DfE 2012). Therefore, this may not be considered the most essential criteria for supporting early EAL children but there are many studies which support first language use when supporting early EAL children (see Michael et al. 2016; Arnot et al. 2014; Krashen 1999). All these research findings suggest that a child who has a strong education in their first language, will find English input more comprehensible. We would argue that teachers need to be aware of the differing needs of EAL children including a child's background. The government policy is wrong to say their first language needs to only be used outside the school, when research both in England and at international level clearly shows supporting EAL pupils in their first language helps their classroom learning (Arnot et al. 2014; Krashen 1999 and Michael et al. 2016). What is even more worrying in government policy is that "EAL has disappeared from the public policy agenda" since the publications of the EAL policy brief in 2012 (Sutton 2017, 29).

Overall the body of available literature suggests that there is a paucity of research on what works in raising the achievement of EAL pupils in schools. However, recent research identified the reasons behind schools' success in raising achievement levels, which included the quality of teaching and learning, effective leadership at all levels, effective use of an inclusive curriculum, diversity in the school workforce, strong values and high expectations and the effective use of assessment data to monitor and track EAL performance and targeted support and interventions (see Demie 2017; Demie and Mclean 2016; Ofsted 2009). Many of these success factors focus on driving school improvement for all groups of pupils. The key challenge for this study is therefore to find out which strategies schools can use to make a difference to the achievement of pupils with EAL.

2. Research aims and methods

2.1. Research aims

The main purpose of this research was to examine the success factors behind the increased achievement of pupils with EAL. It was similar to other studies that have looked at examples of schools which provide an environment where underachieving groups can flourish, but also reflects the perspective of pupils, using detailed case studies to illustrate how policy and practice help to raise the achievement of pupils, with a strong emphasis on what works. Two overarching research questions guided this research:

- What are the success factors in raising achievement?
- What are the implications for policy and practice?

2.2. Research methods

The methodological approach for this research comprised case studies of selected schools and focus group interviews. Details of the methodological framework are summarised below:

Focus groups: Parent, pupil, governor and headteacher focus groups were carried out to ascertain their views on strategies that worked to raise achievement and to identify whether their views mirrored those of the participants in the case study interviews.

Case studies: Using detailed case studies research was carried out to study the school experiences of pupils with EAL. A structured questionnaire was used to interview headteachers, teachers, support staff, parents and pupils to gather evidence of factors which enhance learning, how well pupils with EAL are achieving, pupils' views about the school and its support systems. The aim was to triangulate the voices of the various stakeholders in their education. Eight primary schools with significant EAL populations were selected for the case studies. Each school was visited for two days to gather the evidence reported in this study. The case study schools as a whole included a range of ethnic groups, community languages spoken, free school meals and pupils with EAL needs. Key criteria for the selection of schools were as follows:

- Exceptionally good KS2 and GCSE results.
- An above-average proportion of students with EAL.
- Good and outstanding schools in Ofsted inspection criteria.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made here includes interviews with: 8 headteachers; 8 assistant headteachers; 5 deputy headteachers; 3 inclusion managers; 2 Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs); 15 class teachers; 8 teaching assistants; 3 learning mentors; 55 pupils with EAL; 5 parents. Nine lesson observations were carried out, together with a scrutiny of relevant documentation including previous Ofsted reports; analysis of pupils' work and attainment data. In the eight schools we visited, we carried out lesson observations with the aim of developing an understanding of how schools and teachers support EAL pupils and value diverse cultures/heritages and how the children with EAL responded to lessons. Classroom observations focused on teachers' interactions with EAL pupils and interactions between groups of children in the classroom.

2.3. Data collection and analyses

The main empirical basis for this research was the data collected annually in January on stages of fluency in English and languages spoken by 15,638 pupils with EAL in each LA school. The sample for performance analysis consisted of 2409 pupils who had completed KS2, and 1563 students who completed GCSE in 2015. Similar longitudinal data were also collected about each individual pupil every January since 1997. Additionally, a range of background information including details of pupils' ethnic backgrounds, free school meals, gender, date of admission, levels of fluency in English and language spoken at home was also collected for all schools in the LA. Each pupil in the sample had a unique pupil number, and this was used to match socio-economic information with KS2 and GCSE results. In most cases language data and levels of fluency in English forms were completed by EAL teachers, supported by information from parents. These data were used to analyse the KS2 and GCSE data for each of the case study schools by comparing them to the national and LA average. These data were also used to calculate the percentage of pupils in each school and the LA. Trend data were also used to see the progress made over a period (see Tables 1 and 2).

2.4. Measures of pupil performance and stages of English acquisition

In the English education system, pupils aged 10 to 11 years take the Key Stage 2 tests at the end of Year 6. Pupils aged 15 to 16 years also take General Certificate of Secondary Education

Table 1. KS2 attainment in the case study schools.

Case Study Schools	% of Pupils with EAL 2015	EAL Pupils		
		KS2 Level 4+ (Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM) combined)		
		2013 (%)	2015 (%)	Change (%)
School A	68	74	86	12
School B	50	69	72	3
School C	82	74	82	8
School D	63	63	95	32
School E	61	94	92	−2
Case Study	65	75	85	10
LA	52	82	84	2
National	19	71	77	6

At Key Stage 4 the case study schools' achievement was higher than the LA and national average. GCSE achievement in 2015 rose in the case study schools and the gap with the LA is 13 percentage points compared to 14 percentage points with the national average (see Table 2).

Table 2. GCSE attainment in the case study schools.

Case Study Schools	% of Pupils with EAL	EAL Pupils		
		5+ A*–C incl. English and Maths		
		2014 (%)	2015 (%)	Change (%)
School F	28.1	61	70	9
School G	58.3	80	82	2
School H	65.1	60	58	−2
Case Study	48.2	68	69	1
LA	37.9	59	56	−3
National	15.7	55	55	0

(GCSE) exams at the end of KS4. These are a series of tests and exams in the individual subjects the pupils have been studying. For the purpose of this paper underachievement is defined as low attainment which is attainment that is below national average or below age-related expectations.

It is also important to recognise that proficiency in the English language is the major factor influencing the performance of EAL pupils. However, such data are not available at the national level at the time of this study. As a result of a lack of national data in this study we used one inner London LA's four stages of English to describe the typical progression through the different stages of English proficiency. These four stages range from beginner to fluent and include Stage 1 (New to English), Stage 2 (Becoming familiar with English), Stage 3 (Becoming confident as user of English) and Stage 4 (Fully fluent in English). The four stages are developed from the Hester (1993) EAL assessment scale and is widely used in the LA schools as a diagnostic tool to analyse needs for future teaching, tracking progress and to provide base line information for statistical purposes and are described fully in Demie (2013, 2016).

2.5. Terminology

English as an additional language (EAL): EAL refers to learners whose first language is not English. Pupils learning EAL are not a homogeneous group; they come from diverse linguistic, cultural, ethnic and educational backgrounds. They may also be at different stages of English

language acquisition (from complete beginner to fully fluent) and may also already be fluent in several other languages or dialects.

We need to be cautious about the definition of EAL used in the national school census data collection. The census data only reflect exposure to a language other than English at home or in the community. They give no indication of a student's proficiency in the English language.

3. Raising the achievement of pupils with EAL: good practice in schools

This section explores the achievement in the case study schools and key strategies used to raise the achievement of pupils with EAL. The case study schools studied in this research defy the association of poverty and low outcomes, and they enable pupils to succeed against the odds. All case study schools have an EAL cohort much higher than the national average. Table 1 shows that the attainment of all pupils has been exceptionally high. Of the pupils in the case study schools, 85% achieved level 4 or above at KS2 in 2015. From 2013, the case study schools were consistently scoring above 80% at KS2. The improvement rate of pupils in the case study schools is similar to the national and LA average, however the starting position of the case study schools is much higher. Between 2013 and 2015 pupils in the case study schools improved from 75% to 85%. This is an improvement rate of 10% compared to 6% in all schools at national level.

In general pupils with EAL achieved better at KS2 and GCSE than the national average in the case study schools.

The above section covered the attainment in the case study schools. All schools achieved remarkable results for all their pupils, far exceeding national average benchmarks at the end of Key Stage 2 and GCSE. There are various reasons for the vast improvement in the achievement in the case study schools compared to the LA and nationally in England. Therefore, the key question for research is, "What is the reason for such successful achievement in the case study schools?" As part of the interviews headteachers and teachers were asked, "What strategies does your school use to raise achievement?" The research identified a range of common strategies that supported pupils with EAL to achieve well at school. These included strong leadership on equality and diversity, an understanding of pedagogy that best supported pupils with EAL, targeted support towards their progress, an inclusive curriculum which recognised and celebrated children's cultural heritage and the use of performance data for school improvement which included the tracking of individual pupils' progress and achievement. These good practices are discussed below.

3.1. Strong leadership on equality and diversity

One of the main reasons for the excellent performance of pupils for whom English is an additional language and the huge improvement in the schools as a whole, over time, was strong leadership on equality and diversity. The headteachers set high expectations for the senior team and the staff as a whole. There was a relentless focus on improvement, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning, effective use of data and higher achievement by students. The headteachers were very well supported by senior teams exceptionally effective in guiding, monitoring and evaluating the many aspects of the schools' work. Staff were trusted and valued by the leadership team, expectations of all pupils' social and

academic achievement were high and the schools were deeply embedded in the life of the area they served. There was an exceptional sense of teamwork across the schools. This was reflected in the consistent and committed way managers at all levels worked towards the schools' aims to raise achievement. The schools were proud of their efforts to maintain their inclusive ethos. This was seen in the very good progress made by all groups of students.

The headteachers were proud of their schools' foci in further developing the EAL Department and one headteacher argued that such a service is "critical for schools with large numbers of pupils with EAL". Our observations and interviews with the staff suggested that the level of expertise within the schools to support students with learning English as an additional language was outstanding. All staff were trained in specific techniques promoted by the Raising the Achievement of Bilingual learners in Primary Schools pilot programme, January 2004: planned opportunities for speaking and listening; use of first language; talk partners; pre-teaching and application of these techniques across the curriculum. These elements of support were based on rigorous scrutiny and analyses of students' performance data, to appropriately target resources towards specific individuals or groups. Outcomes of such interventions were evaluated candidly and informed future planning. Overall, in these schools there was a strong culture of self-evaluation pervading all areas. The views of pupils, parents and students were sought regularly, were much valued and used to inform worthwhile changes. This can be clearly seen from the headteachers' interviews about what works, which are summarised below:

Whatever backgrounds the pupils come from, we want to ensure they succeed. All pupils are given the opportunity.

We aim to ensure the cultural and linguistic heritages of pupils are welcomed and valued within the school curriculum.

We are very good in using data and monitoring progress and this has been useful in identifying pupils with EAL who are underachieving.

There was a high commitment to ensuring that pupils with EAL were included in all activities and the care and concern for all pupils was of a high priority. Successful strategies including effective teaching and learning; targeted support and the use of assessment data to monitor the progress of pupils with EAL, which are discussed below, were put in place to raise the achievement of EAL.

All members of staff that were interviewed felt they were well supported by senior managers and knew who to go to for support and help. Overall there was a clear emphasis on collective responsibility in the school which ensured that senior and middle leaders were fully accountable for their areas and pupil progress. There were regular meetings with staff to discuss putting strategies in place to address any issues raised about specific pupils. Their impact was apparent in the good performance of pupils with EAL and very high standards for all. The exemplary relationships within the staff teams enabled the schools' performances to be monitored in a positive, supportive and constructive way. The schools had an accurate view of their performances and identified priorities for future development.

Most importantly, in the words of one headteacher, "equality of opportunity is at the core of school life". The schools' systems ensured that all groups of pupils achieved equally well. Staff worked efficiently, sensitively and successfully to remove barriers to learning faced by large numbers of pupils. The schools pride themselves on their diversity.

3.2. Effective teaching and learning in the classroom

It was evident that all staff in the schools, including senior managers and the teaching assistants, were responsible for the achievement of EAL pupils and understood how high quality teaching for all pupils was synonymous with high quality practice for EAL learners. In the words of one headteacher: "Whatever we do, everything is done from the EAL perspective ... the EAL strategies are a good starting point with any child."

On entry to school all pupils with EAL were assessed in English, using the LA's Stages of English and National Curriculum descriptors. The LA's Stages of English recognise that the EAL learning needs of pupils vary greatly from beginner to advanced learners. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s four stages of English have been used in the LA's schools to describe the different stages of English through which pupils commonly progress. These are described above in the literature review. The stages of English are used as a diagnostic tool to analyse needs for future teaching, track pupils' progress and provide baseline information for statistical purposes. As well as an assessment in English, pupils' literacy and numeracy skills were also assessed in their first language to ensure that teaching was pitched at the appropriate cognitive level. These assessments led to individual target setting and additional interventions which included tailored EAL talk sessions for small groups of pupils, one to one support, booster sessions and mentoring of pupils with EAL by bilingual teaching assistants. Such interventions ran alongside, rather than instead of high quality EAL provision in the classroom. All staff were aware of pupils' developing English and planned for and supported them accordingly.

All staff adopted a holistic approach which incorporated a range of strategies known to be effective for learners with EAL. These included collaborative learning, a focus on talk and vocabulary development throughout the curriculum, an experiential curriculum and promotion of pupils' first languages in the classroom as a tool for learning. Pupils had many opportunities through planned talk and drama to use their home languages but also to develop and rehearse their English in a non-threatening environment before contributing to a larger audience or writing. Teachers created supportive learning environments in which learners felt safe to take risks when speaking both their first language and English. As one teacher, who described herself as an EAL learner, suggested, "If I don't feel safe, it's putting me off speaking. I need to be able to make mistakes." This, she went on to say, should be the same for pupils in the classroom.

All schools had also reviewed their curricula to ensure that they were appropriate, accessible and engaging for the diverse school communities. Pupils' learning was contextualised through experiences and visuals and was closely linked to a thematic approach to learning. Meticulously planned topics were introduced through stimulating experiences. Pupils, for example, might arrive one morning in a sand and shell strewn classroom to find a message in a bottle, as stimulus for learning. This not only made learning exciting but enabled children from all backgrounds to enjoy learning. This approach also makes links between different subject areas so that children were learning in context and could apply their learning across different curriculum contexts. One teacher claimed, "we wouldn't even consider starting something without visual support". There was attention paid to, "how is it presented? What does it look like?" (class teacher). Furthermore, prior to a new topic, vocabulary was identified and explored, displayed, modelled and added to, so that children would hear and use the target vocabulary within the different contexts across the curriculum. Learning sequences

were then exemplified through working walls which were used as tools for prompts during lessons and key vocabulary was evident throughout the schools, as was a focus on oral sentence structure.

In each school, there was a focus on talk throughout the curriculum, with language development promoted through adult modelling, talk partners, talk frames and the general expectation that pupils responded in full sentences. The role of collaborative learning in both cognitive and language development, was emphasised by all teachers, as was their awareness of their own roles in providing good role models of English language. Pupils themselves were aware of the value of collaborative work for supporting their English development. One pupil suggested “your partner has words and knows the language and you put your ideas together and learn the language and become better”. Teachers identified that pairings and groupings were not only good to encourage use of pupils’ home languages but also to provide good English language models and scaffolding for the EAL learners. One pupil concurred, suggesting, “When I say a word wrong he corrects me and says try again and every day I learn a couple more words.”

Talk frames were used to scaffold pupils’ language to move them towards the written form and talk partners were used extensively to enable pupils to discuss and rehearse language. One school developed a focus on drama and oral rehearsal after modelling, supported by experience, visuals and objects. Planned opportunities for talk underpinned all learning, to the point where one pupil commented on arrival, “Everyone was talking so I could learn the word from them.”

Teachers recognised the importance of supporting pupils with sentence structures orally, requiring pupils to respond in full sentences and recasting when grammatically incorrect. Issues in grammar were identified and addressed. In one school an EAL co-ordinator stated:

I encourage teaching of language structures through talk partners, with a focus on response. They must respond in the correct way in whole sentence answers. We rehearse the question together – I model first – they repeat, say it to their talk partner and then we focus on the response. In the planets work for example we rehearsed the request, tell me a name for your planet and explain why it is a good name for it. The response was scaffolded for them but they needed to use the structure and conjunction “because” – My planet is called – because-. (Demie et al. 2008, 72)

This practice began in the Nursery where there was a recent project, “Responding to Talk” which supported adults to refine pupils’ responses into academic language and whole sentences during class discussion, or in small groups. In the Early Years, pupils learnt English through carefully planned opportunities to both hear and use English in meaningful activities and experiences. Adults scaffolded pupils’ learning through role play, songs and rhymes and circle activities, developing contextual understanding and providing essential repetition of the language focus. A teacher was observed reading the story, *Dear Zoo* to pupils, in preparation for a visit to the zoo. The teacher and pupils told the story together, exploring each page through questioning and modelling, focusing on the names and the body parts of the different animals. The class storytelling was supported through toy animals in a story sack, gestures, actions and pictures on a board to which the teacher referred. A song also required pupils to use their newly required vocabulary independently; this gave them opportunities to rehearse new vocabulary in meaningful contexts and become part of their language repertoire.

KS1 and KS2 teachers also described how they focused on vocabulary development, especially when teaching reading, modelling it in context, repeating it throughout the day and through deliberate choices of texts so that pupils met academic language in texts, not just “everyday language”. Prior to a new text, vocabulary is identified, displayed, modelled, referred to and added to. Pupils themselves referred to teacher modelling and contextualising as a strategy which helped them to do well. One child explained, “she [the teacher] does it first on the board, on a different subject so we don’t copy it and then do our own” and another, “the teacher explains clearly to us and if we don’t understand they draw it and give us examples”. The teacher meanwhile explained how “you have to constantly read faces for understanding; repeat, pair and group pupils so they can listen and understand”.

Home languages were given priority in classrooms and used as a tool for learning. Pupils with the same languages were encouraged to support each other in class, and encouraged to use their first language through talk partners, drama and the Talk for Writing, an approach where they might develop and rehearse their English before contributing to a wider audience or writing. Pupils were encouraged to maintain and develop their home languages so that the skills learnt in their first languages were transferred to English. One example of this was one school’s class prayer books. Children were encouraged to write a prayer in their home language with their families and to share these at school. This encouraged children to “hear the melodies in the languages. We are helping them to transfer their skills in their first language into English.” The role that developing their first language played in developing English was clearly shown in the words of one child who was reflecting on the comparative grammatical systems: “In English there is one way – how are you? But in Tigrinya there is one way for boys and one way for girls.” It was evident in all the schools that children were happy to use their first languages in the classroom in a range of learning and social contexts.

3.3. Effective targeted support for EAL pupils

Our observation and interview evidence during the case study school visits suggest that the teamwork underpinned support for pupils with EAL needs in the schools. At termly Learning Assessment meetings, the needs of individual pupils and their EAL targets, drawn from the Stages of English assessments, were discussed with headteachers, deputy headteachers/inclusion managers and EAL staff, and interventions put into place and monitored regularly for effectiveness. In the schools designated EAL teachers, together with EAL support staff, many of whom were bilingual, supported teaching and learning. One school explained a clear rationale for the targeting of support to pupils with EAL needs, advocating long term year group focused targets, with sufficiently flexible timetables to meet the changing needs of the school. For example, in one school the bilingual teaching assistants were placed in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1, to help pupils build their confidence, encourage them to develop their first language and support their English. Placing bilingual teaching assistants here also helped build sustainable partnerships with parents as bilingual teaching assistants were often able to communicate with parents and therefore engage them in their children’s learning and the life of the school.

In almost all the case study schools change and improvement is implemented through clear induction processes, targeted interventions to improve EAL proficiency in English and attainment, one to one support and interventions in English and maths, making the teaching programme of EAL pupils through personalised or differentiated teachings to meet the

needs of pupils with EAL. The extent to which they make progress is evident in a number of discussions we had with the assistant headteacher (inclusion), teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors and the leadership team in Case Study School A. Overall our interviews and observation in this school clearly demonstrate teachers' knowledge and understanding of EAL pedagogy and strategies that have been developed. We noted EAL teaching principles inform classroom pedagogy and are incorporated into lessons by providing effective targeted support to raise achievement. These include good induction processes for new arrivals which incorporate assessment of both English and child first language, the use of talk partners, sentence starters, speaking frames, collaborative working strategies, providing visual resources to support learning, differentiation from class teachers monitored by Senior Management Team (SMT), clear tracking of progress and monitoring via provisions mapping, etc.

The school also uses three teaching assistants who are designated EAL assistants for part of their time. All have developed an understanding of EAL pedagogy through attending whole school training and additional specialist training by an EAL Consultant to deliver intervention programmes, designed to develop the more academic language for EAL children – Talking Maths and guided writing units for children with EAL. They join weekly team meetings after school, reporting back and contributing to planning. Whilst working in classrooms, they emphasised their role in helping children to apply their learning from the group work and in modelling and supporting children to use the key vocabulary and sentences starters, rephrasing questions and supporting them to structure responses.

The impact of targeted support in raising achievement can be clearly seen from the examples of outstanding school practice outlined above in the school. Evidence from our analysis of individual EAL pupil progress in School A also suggests a remarkable achievement in terms of progress in levels of fluency in English and attainment at the end of key stages. For example we noted that a Portuguese speaking child that was assessed as Stage 1 (Beginner in English) at Year 1 when she joined the school made huge progress. With additional support outlined above her level of fluency improved from beginner stage to fully fluent by the time she started Year 6. What is more significant is her KS2 results confirm that she achieved level 5 in maths and level 4 and above in reading, grammar, punctuation and spelling. We would argue this is an excellent achievement for an EAL pupil with no English when she joined the school. This evidence also suggests how effective the target support for the EAL pupil was in the case study school.

Schools emphasised the importance of distinguishing between EAL needs and special educational needs (SEN) and described how progress through the stages of English is carefully monitored and unpicked to identify any learning difficulty. Where there is concern, an assessment of and through the first language using mother tongue materials is carried out and interpreters are employed for meetings and assessments with outside agencies, demonstrating that there are clear protocols to differentiate between needs arising from learning EAL and those related to SEN and how this informs choice of provision.

Targeted support from EAL co-ordinators and EAL teachers: Many schools had a dedicated EAL co-ordinator, who was also a class teacher or assistant head, who had oversight for EAL provision throughout the school. In one of the case study schools, where 20% of its school population was Portuguese speaking, the co-ordinator herself was of Portuguese origin and had come to the school originally as a Portuguese support teacher. Her promotion to a senior manager role enabled Portuguese parents, many of whom had been reticent to enter the

school before her arrival, as well as pupils, to see how their culture and heritage were valued at the school. She was also able to raise their profile at a strategic level and brought to the school a detailed understanding of the needs of the Portuguese community, the political climate in Portugal, the legacy of dictatorship, the changing nature of the community surrounding the school and how all these issues affect the pupils and their parents. This enabled her to devise a detailed action plan to empower Portuguese pupils, parents and staff to raise the achievement of the Portuguese pupils at the school.

She and other co-ordinators regularly observed class teachers with an EAL focus and discussed targets with teachers and teaching assistants to improve their future practice, as well as updating EAL registers and overseeing target setting for individual pupils. Many co-ordinators managed teaching assistants who worked under the EAL co-ordinators' and class teachers' direction. They trained assistants in specific strategies for EAL learners and were accountable for their ability to enhance the learning of pupils with EAL.

Thorough data analysis informed the EAL teachers' work across the schools. When allocated to a year group the EAL teacher attended planning meetings and identified new vocabulary and areas of challenge for pupils with EAL in the focus classes. One co-ordinator, "Identified unfamiliar vocabulary for the new story 'Traction Man' and sourced objects for the teacher to use, when introducing the story." Furthermore, she identified language demands of the lesson and set language targets to move pupils from Stage 2 to Stage 3 of the LA's Stages of English fluency. These language targets were additional to their class targets and were shared with all members of staff. EAL teachers ensured that these aspects of language were modelled by the class teachers and were used by the pupils throughout the lessons. If there was any withdrawal work it was linked closely to the class work. This way of working had become ingrained across the schools. In the afternoons EAL teachers often worked with new arrivals in small groups of no more than three, especially those at an early stage of learning English.

3.4. Targeted support from EAL support staff

Supporting adults had a unique role in the achievement of pupils with EAL in schools. Like the teachers, all had received specific training in routine practices and specific interventions to raise the achievement of pupils including encouraging children to use their first language; talk partners; pre-teaching specific concepts and then applying these techniques across the curriculum. Teachers and support staff planned and delivered lessons together. Whilst the teacher led the lesson, support staff modelled the English language for pupils using visuals and supported the pupils with EAL in drama activities, using activities such as hot seating. One teaching assistant explained, "It is now an automatic process – we know what is needed, so we embed it automatically."

In one school support staff carried out work on a special science project with pupils with EAL needs which were experiential in nature. One example was the growing of seeds where there was plenty of opportunity for adult-child interaction as there were two adults and eight children. The teaching assistants taught the children age-related academic vocabulary relating to the growth of seeds.

Whilst pupils might move quite quickly from Stage 1, being new to English, to a secure Stage 2, becoming familiar with English, they often needed additional support to develop more demanding language for learning, for example to operate successfully in written

activities. Much group/one to one work was done to support this. One example involved a teaching assistant and teacher discussing how Stage 1 learners were “chatty” in the playground but lacked confidence in classroom talk. Together they planned a series of short regular slots centred on group work, for four pupils, which developed talk around a picture trigger, supported by adult modelling, sentence starters and then followed by supported writing. The pupils were then encouraged to use this learning in the classroom context.

Similarly teaching assistants led a “Talking Maths” programme, which developed use and understanding of language in Mathematics and was closely linked to class work when pupils were supported to use their learning in a whole class setting. Teaching assistants gave support to small groups of EAL learners with grammatical issues within EAL guided writing groups. They tailored the input of sessions to what children might need in their whole class sessions. Many of these teaching assistants also evaluated, monitored and recorded pupils’ progress and reflected on how group work developed pupils’ oral confidence.

Key adults, often teaching assistants, who were described as “buddies”, were assigned to newly arrived pupils who had no knowledge of English, especially when they shared the same language. In one school, newly arrived pupils were often given a set of key visual prompt keys to aid communication within their first days. In the words of one child, these included, “the magic words, please, thank you, hello, I am sorry”. Many teaching assistants also ran language clubs, taught mother tongue as a foreign language and provided interpreting when needed. One Spanish speaking assistant, for example, ran after school clubs in Spanish twice a week, taught Spanish as a Modern Foreign Language to Year 3 during the day and supported new arrivals with EAL needs. Often the content of these language clubs mirrored the content of the curriculum, enabling the children to learn both in English and in their home language.

3.5. Effective use of assessment data for monitoring and tracking EAL pupils

The use and analysis of EAL data was one of the most significant drivers for raising achievement and narrowing the gaps in the case study schools. There is evidence that individual teachers within the classroom used data for informing teaching and learning including lesson planning; to inform accurate targets for individual students, gender and ethnic groups; arranging groupings for teaching and learning and tracking progress of pupils and setting high expectations. As part of the case study we asked the question “how effective is the school in using EAL data for improving the quality of teaching and learning?” To what extent are the English proficiency assessment data used for tracking the progress of pupils with EAL to identify *support needs* and target interventions? The following responses were given to the questions put to the teachers we interviewed:

The school has a good system for assessing and mapping the progress of pupils with EAL at individual and group level. A wide range of data on English levels of fluency and National Curriculum levels are analysed by ethnicity, levels of fluency in English and gender, enabling the school to identify support needs and organise the deployment of resources appropriately, whether for pupils with EAL or underachieving groups. (Deputy headteacher, School C)

[The school assessment tracking spreadsheet] strongly supports the school’s main business of teaching and learning. The system can identify “threshold” pupils and so trigger targeted interventions. Teachers record progress as points linked to National Curriculum levels or predicted GCSE grades. Using red, amber and green to indicate “actual” against “expected” levels of progress and attainment is clear and easy to grasp, which is useful in discussions with parents. (Data manager, School H)

There is a strong focus on learning in the school to make sure no student with EAL falls behind. Through detailed monitoring and tracking, students with EAL who fall below the expected level or are at risk of falling behind, are quickly identified and individual needs are targeted. All students are assessed carefully using LA stages of fluency in English to ensure that they receive the appropriate provision and are making the required progress. (Head of EAL Department, School H)

This research also confirmed similar findings in other case study schools and indicated that the schools have well-developed effective pupil tracking and monitoring management information systems. All teachers had tracking sheets for pupils, identifying types of support, previous school and favourite subjects. In particular, the EAL Department's sheet included detailed background information data such as date of birth, place of birth, date of arrival in UK, ethnic background, home language, stage of fluency in English, date of admission, attendance rate, eligibility for free school meals, SEN stage, mobility rate and years in school to track the progress of groups and individuals, and to ensure that no pupil became "invisible". Data can be retrieved in many combinations and at any time, which makes the assessment database a valuable management tool, for example, in reviewing the impact of provision on those with English as an additional language.

Overall our observation, interviews and evidence during the case studies suggested that in these schools, teachers make effective use of data to evaluate the quality of provision and to identify and provide targeted support for differentiated groups of students. The schools are particularly "forensic" in monitoring the progress of particular groups, for example boys, those receiving free school meals (FSM), those with special educational needs (SEN) or students with English as an additional language. The interventions employed in the school where data analysis had highlighted issues to be addressed included providing additional provision including one to one support and making changes to the teaching programme, such as more personalised or differentiated teaching to meet the needs of pupils with EAL. As a result, pupils with EAL make rapid progress and achieved outstanding results at GCSE, the extent to which is illustrated below:

Case Study A: Pupil A speaks Urdu as a mother tongue and came from India. He was at beginner (Stage 1) level of fluency in English when he started his primary education in Lambeth. Through targeted support which included one to one support and booster classes, his language fluency improved fast. At GCSE he achieved A* in Chemistry, English Language, English Literature, Spanish and D&T Textiles Tech; with A grades in Biology, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, Religious Studies, Citizenship. He also achieved C in Applied ICT and Study Skills. The secondary school has made a big impact on Pupil A. He is one of the high flying students with EAL. In addition to excellent performance in threshold results his value added progression between KS2 and GCSE was also excellent and top of the national league table. (School F)

Case Study B: Pupil B is Black African of Somali heritage and arrived in the UK. She attended primary school in Lambeth and was assessed as Stage 2 when she took the KS2 tests, that is, she required considerable English support to access the National Curriculum. As a result of her English language barrier, her results at KS2 showed that she achieved no level in English, L2 in mathematics and L4 in science. However, with well-targeted support at this school this has changed considerably. Through one to one, booster classes and in class support, her level of English fluency improved to Stage 4 (fully fluent) by the time she took GCSE examinations. The school's support was considerable and this helped her to achieve B in History, Mathematics, Religious Studies, Science; C in English language, English Literature, French, Citizenship and Sociology. This is a remarkable achievement for a child who had only six years in the English Education system. (School F)

Case Study C: Pupil C came from Portugal and attended primary school in Kensington and Chelsea. She speaks Portuguese at home and was fluent in English by the time she completed Key Stage 2, gaining level 4+ in English, maths and science. Through targeted support which included booster classes, one to one tuition, and in class intervention, she achieved 'A's at GCSE in French, mathematics and Portuguese, 'B' in English literature, 'C' in English language, business studies, economics, religious studies and science; 'D' in arts and design (textiles). What is particularly special about Pupil A is that her value added score tops national expectations and she has shown excellent progress between KS2 and GCSE. (School G)

Case Study D: Pupil E is Black African and of Somali heritage. She attended primary school in LA. She speaks Somali at home and was completely new to English on arrival. Her English fluency improved rapidly and she achieved level 5+ in English, maths and science at the end of KS2. Through effective targeted support at school, she achieved A* in English language, English literature, French, biology, chemistry, history, mathematics, physics, religious studies; A grades in additional maths, citizenship, statistics, and B in study skills. The school has made a big impact on her learning and academic progress and her value added score topped national expectations. (School H)

Case Study E: Child G came from Poland and speaks Polish at home. He had no English on arrival in the school and was assessed as a Stage 1 beginner. His records for KS1 suggest that he was assessed as W for reading and writing and 2C in maths. At the beginning of Year 6, his level of fluency in English was 3, suggesting that he needed some support to develop more academic language. With additional EAL support from the teachers and TAs [teaching assistants] he achieved level 4 in English and level 5 in maths in the KS2 test results. This is indeed an excellent achievement for a pupil who arrived with no English. (Deputy headteacher, School C)

Case Study F: Pupil H started school in 2003 in the Nursery with no previous experience in English. He speaks Tigrinya, a language that is spoken in Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia. However, following one to one and additional support in the school, he was assessed as Stage 4 fully fluent in English in Year 6. He was a high achiever at KS1 and KS2. His KS1 data show that he achieved level 3 in reading, 2A in writing and maths. At KS2 his performance was as predicted and he achieved level 5 in both English and maths. This is an excellent achievement for a child with no English at the time of starting in school. (School C)

Case Study G: Pupil J, a beginner Stage 1 in English, had no knowledge of English when he joined School D. Initial assessments through Portuguese indicated that he had a well-developed first language and was working at a level appropriate for his age. In conjunction with his class teacher an action plan was developed and he was encouraged to attend the Portuguese club, where teaching linked with the content of the classroom. He continued to write in Portuguese, with the Portuguese speaking teacher marking and discussing next steps with him and also how to transfer his learning into English. By the end of Year 6, he achieved level 5 in English and Maths. (School D)

In conclusion, we would argue that supporting teachers to raise the achievement of pupils with EAL through effective use of data is a strong focus of the schools. The extent to which the schools used data for monitoring and tracking EAL pupils' progress was evident not only in the data shown above, but also in the discussions held with pupils, teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors, inclusion managers, Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) coordinators and EAL teachers. The case study schools were highly effective at analysing data in order to identify EAL pupils who were at risk of underachieving. The excellent range of support provided has had a positive impact on the achievement of pupils with EAL and those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable: "Every pupil is expected and encouraged to achieve their full potential by teachers. We use pupil voice to inform the school self-review and to provide an additional targeted support" (Headteacher, School G).

4. Conclusions and implication for practice and research

This study looks at schools that serve EAL pupils and examines the success factors behind their successful achievement. Two overarching research questions guided this research: why do some schools succeed against the odds? What are the factors contributing to this success?

A complementary methodological approach was used to explore performance and the views of teachers, parents and their children about schooling. First, case studies were carried out to observe lessons and to hold discussions with headteachers, staff, governors and pupils to evaluate and gather evidence on how well all pupils were achieving and the factors contributing to this. The main method of data collection was open ended semi-structured interviews with senior management, teachers, administrative staff and support staff as well as pupils. Second, pupil and parent focus groups were undertaken to ascertain the views of pupils and parents regarding their experiences and on what worked to raise their achievement in school. The main findings of the research identified the following factors and key areas of good practices.

One of the key factors noted where schools were successful in raising achievement of pupils with EAL is the strong leadership with a focus on equality and diversity. At all the case study schools the ethos of the headteacher and senior managers was effectively communicated to the school community, including support staff, governors, parents and students. A strong culture of self-evaluation pervaded all areas of the schools. At senior level it was particularly incisive. It was underpinned by a drive to get the best possible outcomes for each pupil. All school leaders challenged negative attitudes and refused to accept educational failure. Vision and ethos were communicated by senior managers in both overt and more implicit ways in the schools. The physical environment, with positive images and an orderly structure, contributed to this communication. A more tangible quality was the respect shown by staff to students and parents that enabled pupils to express high aspirations for themselves and regard for staff at the schools. For EAL pupils, this was communicated in terms of valuing their own cultural identity which was fostered through the general ethos and particular structures at the schools, including diverse staff, sensitive use of learning mentors and making links with community organisations. All the schools were in the process of developing positive relationships with stakeholders and the wider community.

What is more, in these schools there was an attention to the needs of each individual pupil that created trust and respect amongst parents and a sense of belonging amongst pupils. At all schools the leadership "has developed a sense of family which includes a diverse community of people, under a common vision of learning for all" (Headteacher). The schools supported and celebrated the diversity of their pupils and an environment where there is mutual respect and strong, trusting relationships, and where pupils now achieved very highly.

There are also other success factors that helped in raising the achievement of pupils with EAL. The findings of our study suggested that the case study schools were effective in providing targeted support to improve EAL pupils' language skills to access the national curriculum. In these schools teaching and learning was also of high quality and informed by assessment of performance. The schools recognised that proficiency in English was the key to educational success for their bilingual learners and were effective in supporting this. All schools took strong action to help children acquire fluency in English as soon as possible,

recognising that this was the first barrier to achievement that must be overcome. All schools chose their staff with care from a wide diversity of ethnic minority backgrounds, so that teachers and teaching assistants, as well as other school staff, provided good role models and showed understanding of their pupils' difficulties. The level of expertise within the school to support pupils with was good. The EAL co-ordinators were well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable. Staff were also well aware of the needs of those learners who speak English as an additional language. Consequently, the EAL pupils' needs were met in lessons and targets for their literacy needs set regularly. These learners made very good progress during their time in school.

The use of performance data for school improvement was also a strength of the case study schools. All the schools had effective pupil assessment procedures which were detailed, relevant and constantly updated to reflect staff feedback. Each school also focused on tracking and monitoring EAL pupils' progress and achievement throughout their school life and collected test and assessment data followed by background data such as ethnic background, language spoken, level of fluency in English, data of admission, attendance rate, eligibility for free school meals, EAL stage of fluency, SEN stage, mobility rate, years in school, which teachers' classes have been attended, attendance rate, types of support and postcode data. These data were used to set challenging targets for attainment.

Overall, the evidence presented here enables the conclusion to be drawn that the schools in this study demonstrate the many ways in which they work to support pupils from all EAL backgrounds through a wide range of imaginative and inclusive strategies. The most effective practice was evident where EAL teachers conducted robust assessments with pupils and kept a register with detailed information concerning pupils' first language, level of fluency in English and other relevant data. These data were regularly updated so that pupils' progress could be tracked. Additionally, the communication of these assessments to teachers and support staff enabled pupils to be supported more effectively in their learning.

It was very clear from our research that EAL was at the heart of each school's culture, as one headteacher stated:

The key thing about EAL is that it permeates everything that we do. It is not an add-on. It has to be part of the school culture The provision for pupils with EAL is the responsibility of everyone. As a staff we don't see it as a challenge we see it as an opportunity. We have all these children with EAL, what a wonderful opportunity to share our languages and our cultures.

There are, however, some limitations to this study. While we do not aim to make generalisations from these case studies, we would argue learning from their good practice can make a difference to other schools. Each school had its own character and emphasis but it is clear, from the evidence of the study, that they have common characteristics which underpin their success, including:

- Strong leadership on equality and diversity.
- Effective support to pupils for whom English is an additional language, by trained and experienced teachers.
- Detailed, rigorous examination of performance undertaken regularly and followed by action that leads to improvement.
- Teaching and learning of high quality informed by assessment of performance.
- A broad curriculum which incorporates aspects of pupils' own culture and adds relevance and self-esteem to pupils' view of themselves.

- Teachers and staff from ethnic minority and EAL backgrounds who provide role models for pupils and who understand their needs.

We would argue this needs to be treated as emerging evidence for further research as our study is based on a small number of case study schools. Extending and developing more research into good practice research in raising achievement of specific groups of pupils would be welcomed. The recommendation from this study is that there is a need for additional longitudinal studies using an ethnographic approach in different schools, LAs and regions in England to get a wider picture. Such research is useful for policy makers and schools to provide more evidence on “what works” which are relevant to teachers’ practical concerns.

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